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ANNIVERSARY ISSUE:
Mianus River Gorge, the Conservancy's Oldest Active Project, Celebrates Its Twentieth Year

# THE NATURE CONSERVANCY NEWS

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# THE NATURE CONSERVANCY NEWS

**Published Quarterly by The Nature Conservancy**
**1800 North Kent Street**
**Arlington, Virginia 22209**
*SUE DODGE, EDITOR*

**Volume 24, Number 1** **Winter 1974**



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## LAND CONSERVATION THROUGH PRIVATE ACTION

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The Nature Conservancy works in three ways to protect threatened natural areas: by purchase of land with funds raised through public subscription, by acceptance of donations of land, and by advance acquisition of land for local, state, and federal governments.

A member-governed non-profit organization, The Nature Conservancy was incorporated in 1951 in the District of Columbia for scientific and educational purposes.

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# NEW PROJECTS

**Connecticut**

BANTAM RIVER—Schwartz Addition—(Litchfield County). A conservation easement on .7 acre of rough and rocky land, sloping down to the River, was donated by Mr. Harold A. Schwartz. The Conservancy holds other easements on nearby lands along the Bantam River.

DENNIS FARM PRESERVE (Windham County). Located approximately 35 miles northeast of Hartford, the property includes several swamps and active beaver ponds, as well as a mature stand of mixed hardwoods. The 381-acre preserve, a gift of Colonel Edward B. Dennis, will be managed by the Connecticut Chapter.

LEVONIUS EASEMENT (Windham County). A conservation easement on 2½ acres was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Charles K. Levonius. Bordering the Quinebaug River, the tract contains young woodland and open fields; deer, squirrels, muskrats, and a great variety of birds frequent the area. The Connecticut Chapter hopes to secure other easements in the area to protect the Quinebaug River.

HARRY C. BARNES MEMORIAL NATURE PRESERVE — Matthews Addition — (Hartford County). The Connecticut Chapter purchased this 28-acre tract for addition to the existing 38-acre Barnes preserve. The property is primarily an inland wetland bounded by an esker. Management and fund raising will be the responsibilities of the trustees of the Barnes Nature Center.

POND MOUNTAIN NATURAL AREA—Ackerman Addition — (Litchfield County). The 25-acre tract, bordering Macedonia Brook State Park, consists of woodland and open fields with wetlands at the south end. Purchased by the Connecticut Chapter, the property will be transferred to and managed by the Pond Mountain Trust, Inc., as was the original preserve.

RICHARD COOPER MARSH (New London County). 56 acres of Connecticut River floodplain and tidal marsh were donated by Mr. Richard Cooper. The tract contains old growth forest in its upland portion, and the marsh area is part of the finest tidal river marsh complex in the state. The Connecticut Chapter has management responsibility.

**Indiana**

FALLS CREEK GORGE (Warren County). 43 acres contain a narrow gorge surrounded by a superb oak-hickory forest. Fund raising is underway by the Indiana Chapter.

### Maine

DOUGHTY'S ISLAND (Cumberland County). The 1½-acre island is situated near the Conservancy preserve known as Doughty Point in the inland section of Casco Bay. The coastal island is covered with softwood vegetation and is a well-established nesting site for osprey. The Maine Chapter is fund raising for the purchase and will assume management responsibility.

HERON ISLANDS PRESERVE (Sagadahoc County). This 20-acre area consists of three islands located off Small Point Beach. The islands are rocky and sparsely vegetated, and are heavily used as nesting sites by herons and sea birds. The preserve, a gift of Mrs. Frances Fickett, will be managed by the Maine Chapter.

### Maryland

BLACKWATER REFUGE—Spicer Addition—(Dorchester County). Located on the eastern shore of Chesapeake Bay, the 176-acre tract provides refuge for eagles, endangered Delmarva fox squirrels, waterfowl, and deer. The forested property, fringed with marsh, will be an addition to the Blackwater Refuge owned and managed by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

PATAPSCO STATE PARK—Thompson Addition—(Howard County). 59 acres of rolling, wooded land, contiguous to Patapsco State Park, were acquired by the State of Maryland through an option secured by the Conservancy.

### Michigan

HOLLOWAY RESERVOIR—Additions—(Genesee and Lapeer Counties). Nine tracts totaling approximately 464 acres were purchased by the Conservancy. The forested tracts contain a blend of northern and southern tree species, as well as numerous herbaceous plants and shrubs. An exceptional number of plant species is present due to the area's varied soil types.

### Minnesota

LAKE ALEXANDER — Peterson Addition — (Morrison County). The purchase of 80 acres charges the preserve to 320 acres. The area features a parallel series of kettle lakes and marshes, comprising some of the most complex glacial topography in the state. Wildlife inhabiting the preserve includes white-tailed deer and ruffed grouse. The Minnesota Chapter, which is seeking funds for the purchase, hopes to acquire the remainder of the 1,120-acre area.

MINNESOTA PRAIRIE CHICKEN PRESERVE SYSTEM—Pembina Trail—(Polk County). The 1,440-acre tract consists of a mosaic of old cropland, native prairie, wet sedge pockets, aspen woods and willow thickets. It lies in the heart of the remaining range of the threatened greater prairie chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus,* and provides vital nesting and brooding cover for these birds. A large, stable booming ground is located in one corner of the preserve. The Minnesota Chapter will assume management responsibility with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources and the University of Minnesota Technical College in Crookston. Fund raising is underway by the Chapter.

SUSIE ISLAND NATURAL AREA (Cook County). 55 acres are located on the southern portion of a rock-rimmed island in Lake Superior between Isle Royale and Grand Portage. Basic vegetation type is Great Lakes spruce-fir forest, and the tract is of particular interest because of the presence of several disjunct (mostly Arctic) plant species. Fund raising for the purchase and management of the area will be handled by the Minnesota Chapter.

### Missouri

MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDENS—Morton Addition—(Franklin County). 108 acres contain an upland oak-hickory climax forest situated on a bluff overlooking the Meramec River. The tract, a gift of Mrs. Elise B. Morton and Mrs. Katharine M. Dick, has been conveyed to the Missouri Botanical Gardens for addition to the Arboretum grounds.

PROJECT '76. Funded by Miss Katharine Ordway, Project '76 is the Conservancy's program to acquire tall grass prairie areas in Missouri. Four grassland tracts were recently purchased as part of this program: Alyea Prairie (Barton County), 160 acres; Hobbs Prairie (Barton County), 77 acres; Thoreson/Rosebrugh Prairie (St. Clair County), 320 acres; and Orrell Prairie (Dade County), 79.5 acres. The tracts range from dry to mesic prairie, and provide food, shelter, and protection for a variety of wildlife including the endangered greater prairie chicken, *Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus.*

### New York

DUNHAM BAY WETLANDS — Additions — (Warren County). Three tracts, totaling approximately 90 acres, were purchased in cooperation with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The Bay, on the southern end of Lake George, is edged with three types of marsh: brushy, open, and a combination of the two. Its dense weed beds provide excellent protection for young fish, and the area serves as a breeding ground for numerous fish species. Muskrats, otters, beavers, snapping turtles, belted kingfishers, blue and green herons, and redwinged blackbirds are among the wildlife inhabiting the marsh. The property will be managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

OTTER CREEK (Westchester County). The Conservancy purchased 27 acres on Otter Creek, a tidal creek which flows through a tidal marsh and into Mamaroneck Harbor on Long Island Sound. The marsh complements nearby Van Amaringe Millpond, and together the areas serve as habitat for redwinged blackbirds, ducks, geese, and shorebirds, as well as raccoons, opossum, and red fox.

WHITE LAKE — Mitchell Tract — (Onondaga County). Located about 5 miles east of Syracuse, the 10-acre property contains woodlands with a number of rare species of ferns and orchids. The property is bordered by large tracts of similar terrain, and the Central New York Chapter hopes to create an assemblage of a substantial wilderness area. The property, a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Digney, Mr. and Mrs. John Hastings, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Schneider, Mr. and Mrs. John Honey, and Mr. and Mrs. George Mitchell, will be managed by the Central New York Chapter.

### North Carolina

GREAT DISMAL SWAMP—Additions—(Camden County). Two contiguous tracts, 6,574 and 1,834 acres, were acquired within the Great Dismal Swamp. The Swamp contains a mixture of northern and southern plant communities, including evergreen shrub bogs, loblolly pine barrens, cypress swamps, brier thickets, and mixed swamp forests of red maple, Atlantic cedar, and other swamp species. The two tracts will be transferred to the State of North Carolina for administration by the Department of Natural and Economic Resources.

ENO RIVER—Dubs Parcel—(Orange County). 30 heavily wooded acres fronting the Eno River were acquired on behalf of the State. The purchase is part of the Conservancy's program to assist in obtaining lands along a 20-mile stretch of the Eno for the Eno River State Park.

ENO RIVER—Garrard Lots—(Durham County). Ten acres contain bottomland and a small valley along river rapids. This is the Conservancy's ninth acquisition in its program to acquire lands for the proposed Eno River State Park. All lands are scheduled for transfer to the North Carolina Division of Parks.

**Ohio**

BUZZARDROOST ROCK: CHRISTIAN AND EMMA GOETZ PRESERVE—Farny Addition —(Adams County). With the purchase of this 71-acre tract, the Conservancy has secured over four miles of the edge of the Appalachian Plateau. The property, which contains mixed woodlands and several small dolomite promontories, connects the Buzzardroost and Red Rock preserves with The Wilderness. The tract will be conveyed to the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History for management.

IRWIN PRAIRIE (Lucas County). Located just west of Toledo, this 102-acre wet prairie includes sedges, reeds, prairie grasses, and scattered clumps of aspen. The uncommon spotted turtle occurs in relative abundance. The tract is to be transferred to the State for management by the Department of Natural Resources.

**Pennsylvania**

KING'S GAP (Cumberland County). 1,418 acres, overlooking Cumberland Valley, provide habitat for white-tailed deer, wild turkey and grouse, as well as numerous small mammals and native birds. Lying adjacent to Michaux State Forest, the property is heavily wooded with oak and white pine. The land will be transferred to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for administration by its Department of Environmental Resources.

**Virginia**

GREAT DISMAL SWAMP—Thomson Addition —(Chesapeake County). 179 acres, bordering the feeder ditch to Lake Drummond, were purchased in a cooperative effort with the Izaak Walton League of America. The United States Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife will be responsible for management of the property.

NEW POINT COMFORT LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND (Mathews County). The sparsely vegetated island contains a freshwater pond surrounded by mixed marsh plant life. A gift of the Hollerith family, the 50-acre island provides a nesting site for osprey and least terns. Management will be the responsibility of the Virginia Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America.

**Nova Scotia, Canada**

WILLIAM L. MacCORMACK MEMORIAL PARK (Victoria County). Located on the shore of Great Bras d'or Lake on Cape Breton Island, the 9-acre tract contains an excellent beach and is forested with spruce and alder. A gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Russell, the property will be conveyed to The Nature Conservancy of Canada and subsequently to a local conservation society with a reverter retained by the Conservancy of Canada. Management of the area will be the responsibility of the local group.

# SAVING MIANUS GORGE

## A Twenty Year Effort by the Conservancy's Pioneer Project Committee

by Gloria and Anthony Anable

*Rising dramatically from 200 feet above the crystal-clear Mianus River as it flows down from Westchester County, New York, into Fairfield County, Connecticut, are the ramparts of the celebrated Mianus River Gorge. How this treasured place was saved for posterity is the subject of this memoire; the lessons learned, its theme.*

Today's visitor to the Gorge sees a deep, winding ravine, forested on both sides with towering trees, many of them hundreds of years old. But Mianus River Gorge is far older than its oldest tree. It was carved from the rock by the last advance of the Pleistocene glacier, called the Wisconsin, more than 15,000 years ago, then polished and scoured by the rushing waters of a raging Mianus River as the glacier, melting and retreating, moved northward between 11,000 and 9,000 years ago. The years since have softened the contours on the upper slopes, and buried some of the rough edges in rich soil. The Gorge is today a place of serenity, majesty, and great beauty.

The Gorge itself is by no means the only "spectacular" in the area. There are also such breathtaking sights as: High Tor, a rocky promontory jutting out over the Gorge, commanding an unexcelled "aerial view" of river below; a 20-acre stand of climax hemlocks, the "Hemlock Cathedral," where the voices of visitors are unconsciously hushed to a mere whisper in the presence of these forest giants; an inspiring Lovers' Leap, with its precipitous vertical drop of 150 feet to the river; the Bridle Crossing, across which Chief Myanos led his warriors on many a raid on white settlements in the Colonial Period; and, finally, the sparkling Havemeyer Falls, a series of cataracts from the high tableland above to the river below.

The original inhabitants of this land had known the Gorge for thousands of years, but for decades it has been left almost untouched except for occasional hikers, horseback riders, and roving children. It was not until a crisp autumn day, 1952, that the authors came upon it, quite by chance, during an all-day horseback ride up the river valley from the south. We were immediately struck by its primeval beauty, its tall trees rising above the shining river. It seemed remote and unspoiled, but on all sides, and not far distant, was the disturbing evidence of the great development boom of the 1950's. How long, we wondered, could such a place survive the onslaught of chain saws and bulldozers?

During the succeeding months, we told our friends what we had seen, and invited them to join us in what was still a tentative, unplanned campaign to save the Gorge and its surrounding and protecting lands. Many visits to the Gorge followed, and a growing number of those involved

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Mr. and Mrs. Anable are Secretary-Treasurer and Chairman, respectively, of the Conservancy's Mianus River Gorge Conservation Committee. Robert S. Arbib, Jr., member of the group's Advisory Committee, assisted the Anables in writing this article.

*Four of the five founders of the Mianus River Gorge Conservation Project at the rock-mounted plaque designating the Gorge as a registered Natural History Landmark. Left to right: James Todd, Gloria H. Anable, Anthony Anable, the late Robert J. Hamershlag. Another founder, Edna F. Edgerton, died in 1956.*

agreed that it must be preserved. But ways and means to save the land were not yet clear: could there ever be enough people so that the required financing would be possible? Was it indeed, apart from esthetics, and from the point of view of the naturalist, worth saving?

On a wintry day in 1953, the five founders and four professional evaluator-naturalists visited the Gorge and tramped over the adjoining riverfront land. The professionals were impressed. Here indeed was a "wilderness island" where one might find and study more than 800 species of plant and animal life, including species of 277 wildflowers, 52 trees and 53 shrubs and vines. Here was southern New England as it had been before the white man arrived to change the landscape so drastically. And best of all, this wilderness was less than an hour's drive from New York City, and a much shorter drive from Greenwich, Stamford, Bedford, and White Plains. It was, the professionals agreed, an outdoor schoolroom, a sanctuary, a museum, and a place of abiding beauty.

Mianus Gorge must be maintained and protected—that was the decision and recommendation of the Evaluation Group at a luncheon following the visit. And that was precisely what the Com-

mittee, organized that same day, resolved to do. A slogan was coined: "Take nothing in; take nothing out." It has remained unchanged ever since.

The Committee consisted of the authors and three other founders: Edna F. Edgerton, an extremely active woman, now deceased, who had fallen in love with the Gorge years earlier and had always dreamed of its preservation; James Todd, a dedicated lay naturalist whose home in Bedford adjoined the Gorge area; and Robert J. Hamershlag of Katonah, a lifelong conservationist, long associated with the National Audubon Society.

Greatly encouraged by the endorsement of the professionals, the infant Mianus Gorge Group entered its first full year, 1954, filled with enthusiasm. A simple but effective form of doing business was organized, with a Board of Trustees, an Executive Committee of five officers, and a supporting Advisory Group of seven professionals. The year was filled wih activity: visits and speeches were made to some 50 garden clubs; some 50 of them promised funds and assistance. Newspaper and magazine articles were produced and placed. The public began to learn about Mianus Gorge and to recognize the value of this treasure in its midst.

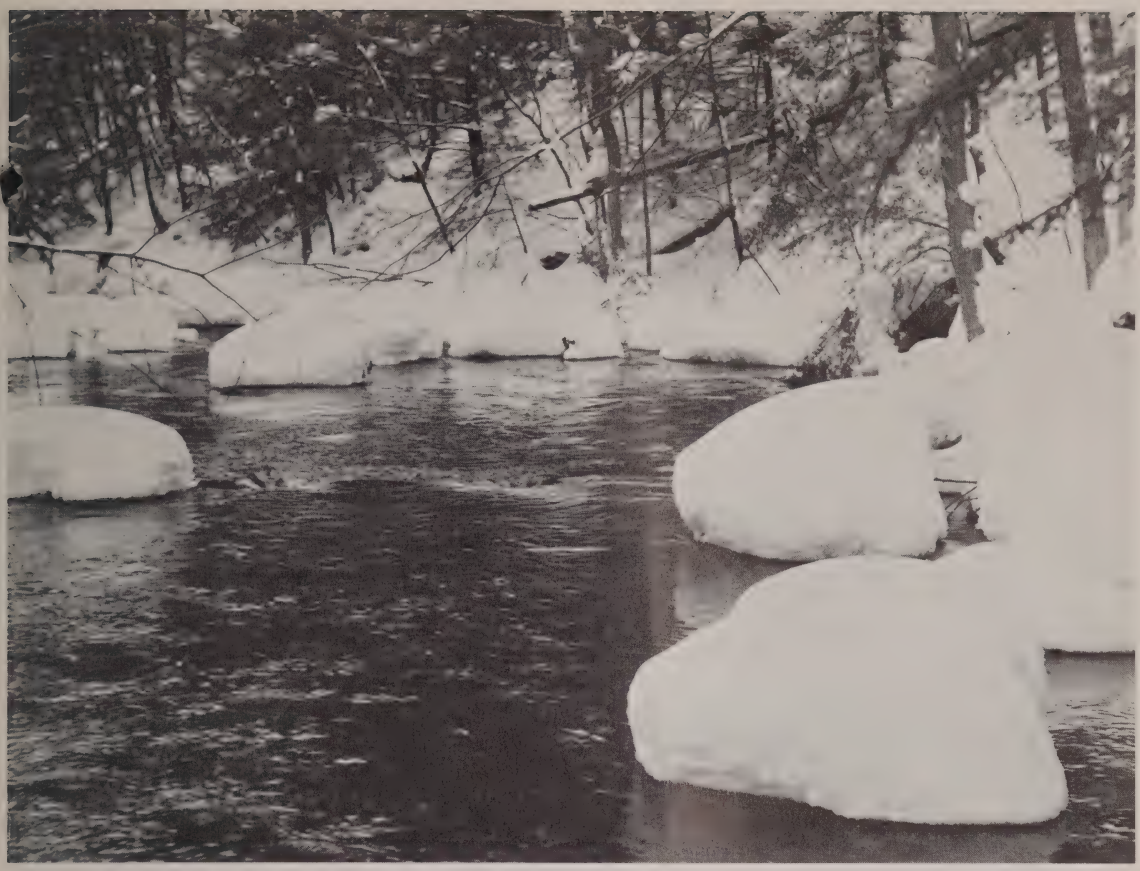
Affiliation with The Nature Conservancy, early in 1954, on the recommendations of Advisory Committee members Richard H. Goodwin and Richard H. Pough, was the greatest achievement of the infant organization; this would be the Conservancy's first project committee. Over the years the intangible advantages of this association have been many. The obvious tangible benefits have included top level professional advice and guidance. And, thanks to the Conservancy, no question has ever been raised about the tax status of the Mianus Gorge Project. Never has a worthwhile land acquisition been thwarted for lack of funds.

But serious challenges loomed during that first crucial year. First, in mid-year, a water company's plan to dam the river a few miles below the Gorge threatened to inundate the lands surrounding the Gorge itself, which would have resulted in disastrous tree-cutting around the reservoir. After much consultation, a compromise was achieved: the dam height would not exceed a mutually agreeable height, and floodwaters would not reach the Gorge area. The second challenge, late in that year, was the prospect of a land developer purchasing 60 critical acres in the middle of the proposed conservation area—land which the group had expected to obtain as a gift until the last moment. On less than one week's notice, the Committee agreed to purchase the land before the developer could act, with three members pledging their life insurance policies to raise the one-third down payment.

*Havemeyer Falls, a series of cascades from the high tableland to the Mianus River below.*

But all was not discouraging. Some 25 garden clubs in New York and Connecticut joined in helping to raise funds to complete the purchase of the prime 60 acres. Two benefit performances netted almost half the amount needed. Finally, with the final payment date drawing near, a private foundation provided the needed amount, stipulating that this should be considered a loan from the Conservancy and a nest egg of the Conservancy's $4 million Project Revolving Fund of today. So the end of the first year found the Gorge with the threat of flooding gone, the critically important acreage acquired, a nucleus of an endowment fund already created, and a giant stride taken toward the initial goal of 100 acres.

About this time several policies were established which, over the years, have proved their wisdom. First, acquire the land. Good intentions of neighbors to hold their acreage in preservation for posterity is not enough. Acquire the land outright. This means continuous fund raising. Second, keep it private. This means no funds from federal, state, or local governments, no lobbying, no politics or political control. Third, keep it pro-



*Above: the Mianus River gently flows, even during a freezing northern winter. Opposite page: the towering Hemlock Cathedral.*

fessional: cultivate a highly selective group of strongly-motivated friends who can be depended on for support, and entrust the management of the lands to the Mianus Gorge Committee with the guidance of professionals when needed.

It was decided that the long-range objective of the group would be to acquire all the 375-400 acres needed to complete the land area that would permanently protect the Gorge area and to build up the necessary endowment that would provide maintenance and protection in the years to come.

Many conservation projects similar to the Mianus Gorge Project owe their existence to the benefactions of a single individual or foundation, frequently accompanied by a trust fund to assure perpetual maintenance and protection. The Mianus Gorge Project was not so fortunate. It had to rely on a broad spectrum of individuals, and on repeated benefactions. But this seeming handicap proved to be an asset. The continual search for new funds kept the Committee alive and alert, and the interest of all those who did contribute built a broad base of support and advocacy.

At first the Committee's funds came from one large foundation, half a dozen individuals, and several dozen garden clubs. In the beginning, it was the garden clubs that carried the Project.

But by 1958, it became evident that fund-raising activities must be greatly expanded. A systematic program was developed to cultivate the leaders of nearby communities—Stamford, New Canaan, Darien, and Greenwich in Connecticut; Bedford, Pound Ridge, Armonk, Port Chester and Rye, New York. Mailings in the thousands went out to what we believed to be excellent prospects. The results, alas, were poor. Most of the community leaders, we learned, were already committed to other causes, and only a small percentage responded at all. The sum proceeds were barely twice the cost of the mailings.

A new era in fund raising then began. We decided to concentrate on the hard core of former contributors whom we knew were interested. Since then the results have been excellent—a 25 to 35 percent response to mailings. Experience has shown that there are two optimum periods during the year for mailings: May, when the forest is at its most beautiful, and November-December, when the holiday spirit of giving seems to fill the air and when the last time has come when deduc-

*Audubon birders rest on the slope of Hemlock Cathedral.*

*Visitors to the Gorge find labels, such as this one, identifying many plant species along the trails.*

tions for gifts can be credited to that year's income tax. Thus, two appeals are staged each year.

Since the beginning, there have been 33 separate land acquisitions, most of them complicated. These acquisitions total 325 acres, valued conservatively today at $453,794. About 41 percent of the land acquired came as gifts from landowners along the river; the remaining 59 percent was bought at prices that have escalated during the past 20 years from $500 to $3,000 per acre. Within the overall conservation area and contiguous to Conservancy land, there is a property of almost equal size owned by a water company, land which most probably will be left untouched.

Over the years, some 450 individuals, foundations, and nature-oriented organizations have contributed annually the funds that are bringing the project close to its goals. Individual contributions over the last 20 years number over 10,000, many of which are obviously repeated gifts. Funds in excess of costs have been placed in an Endowment Fund, which currently totals about $150,000.

In keeping with its policy of professionalism, the Committee has established an exemplary management system for Mianus Gorge. Five miles of foot trails have been marked. A rustic structure at the Visitors' Entrance, with adjoining parking area, shelters a trail map and conservation exhibits—all financed by the Founders' Fund Award of the Garden Club of America. From early June until late September, at least one warden-naturalist is on duty seven days a week, and during April, May, October and November on holidays and weekends. A publication, "Flora and Fauna of the Mianus Gorge," cataloging 832 species of wildlife, now in its fourth edition, is available. On the trails, the more important species of trees, shrubs and vines have been permanently labeled. Several dozen species of the major wildflowers have been labeled by members of local garden clubs. Each year 7,000 to 8,000 individuals visit the Gorge, some in family groups, others in classes or large field trips. The Gorge thus not only serves as a place of quiet and relaxation, but as an outdoor environmental classroom.

What has been accomplished at Mianus Gorge can be achieved elsewhere, given certain essential ingredients. First, the area must be truly worth saving in the public interest. Next, there must be at least one energetic, dedicated individual to work almost full time on the project and to inspire others. There must be a fully dedicated committee of co-workers to handle the complexities of land purchase and financing, fund raising and legal work, publicity and trail management. Skill in arousing widespread public interest and support for the project, and in conveying the abso-

# MIANUS RIVER GORGE CONSERVATION PROJECT

## Legend

- Land Acquired, 1953–73
- Land of Greenwich Water Co.
- Points of Interest
- Ⓐ Ⓑ Ⓒ Return Point Markers
- ✚ Beginning and End of Trails
- Brink of Gorge Trail
- Fringe of Forest Trail
- Bank of River Trail
- Dead End Trails

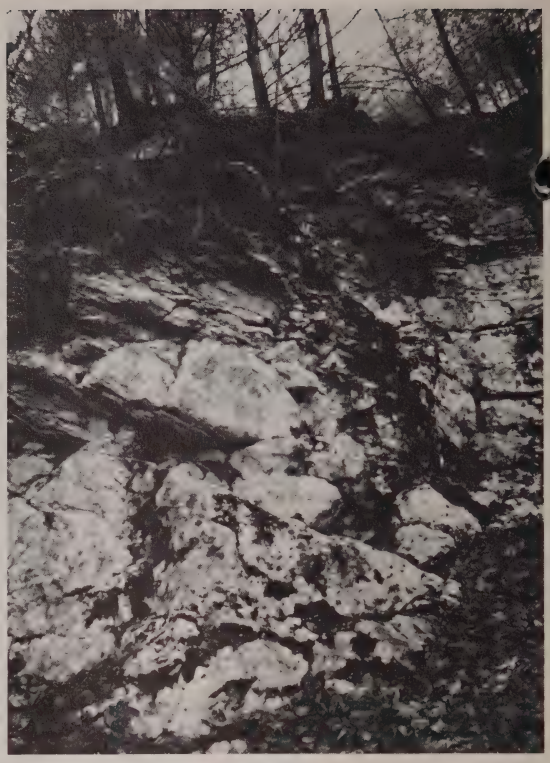
## Trails and Round Trip Distances

Brink of Gorge Trail (red discs on arrows) ~ Outward Bound
To Point A and Return ~ 0.98 mile
To Point B and Return ~ 1.68 miles
To Point C and Return ~ 4.25 miles

Fringe of Forest Trail (blue discs on arrows) ~ Return Trail
Approx. 2.7 miles

Bank of River Trail (white discs on arrows) ~ Best view of River
Approx. .50 mile

*Revised to 2/6/73*



lute integrity of those in leadership, is essential. Finally, association with a national conservation organization such as The Nature Conservancy provides tax exempt status and expert guidance. But above all, the secret ingredient of success is the spirit of absolute dedication and devotion on the part of the members who see the project not as an avocation, but as a crusade.

The importance of the Mianus Gorge Project has been recognized on several occasions: in 1957, the Silver Seal Award of the National Council of State Garden Clubs; in 1958 the Founder's Fund Award of the Garden Club of America and a memorial gift of the New Canaan Garden Club; in 1964 registration as a Natural History Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior; and in 1970, the Alumnae Achievement Medal of Connecticut College.

Having survived many a crisis since the Ice Age, Mianus Gorge today faces a less certain future. Its protectors now face a serious problem in acquiring the last critically-needed acres to achieve their long-term goal. Most of the neighboring landowners who favored giving their lands to the Gorge have now done so. Future acquisitions, for the most part, will have to be by purchase at fantastically escalated prices or by testamentary bequests. Fund raising at present levels simply will not suffice. Borrowing from outside sources, even from the Endowment Fund, does not seem prudent. How the Committee will raise funds to buy additions to its present lands is the paramount question for the years ahead.

But, having faced up to so many crises over the last two decades, the Committee is confident that, with the continued support of its friends, it will surmount this last and most difficult problem of all. To that end it is bending all its efforts.

# THE PRAIRIE CHICKEN IN MINNESOTA

by Steve Oney
Midwest Regional Office

What is known as "Old Yellowlegs," "Kettle-drummer" or "Old Mul Doon," is threatened by extinction, and can fly? The answer, of course, is the northern greater prairie chicken, known to scientists as *Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*.

The prairie chicken is a large, short-tailed bird, marked with bars of black or brown. The males, equipped with brilliant orange-yellow "eyebrows" and air sacs, are among the most colorful of all the prairie dwelling animals.

This plump and personable bird is perhaps best known for its extraordinary courtship display. In late winter or early spring, the males congregate on their booming grounds which are usually located on an open ridge or grassy knoll. There they remain until June, establishing territory and performing their courtship ritual at dawn and dusk. The females begin brief visits to the booming grounds in late March. The number of females and the length of their stay on the booming

ground gradually increase until the height of the mating season in April. In the females' presence, the males boom and display constantly, and mating takes place.

The male begins his courtship display by stamping his feet in a rapid dance, pivoting, and strutting with head and neck lowered. His bright orange air sacs (tympani) inflate and his long neck feathers are erected. His spread tail snaps with an abrupt click and a low booming sound, produced in the voice box, is amplified through the orange air sacs. When a number of birds are booming simultaneously, the calls blend into one continuous sound which may be easily heard a mile away.

But across most of their once-vast range, fewer and fewer prairie chickens can be heard booming on spring mornings. Although populations are judged numerous enough to permit hunting in parts of South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma, the species has been extirpated in Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Ohio, and Arkansas. Only about 12,000 of the birds remain in the grasslands of Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

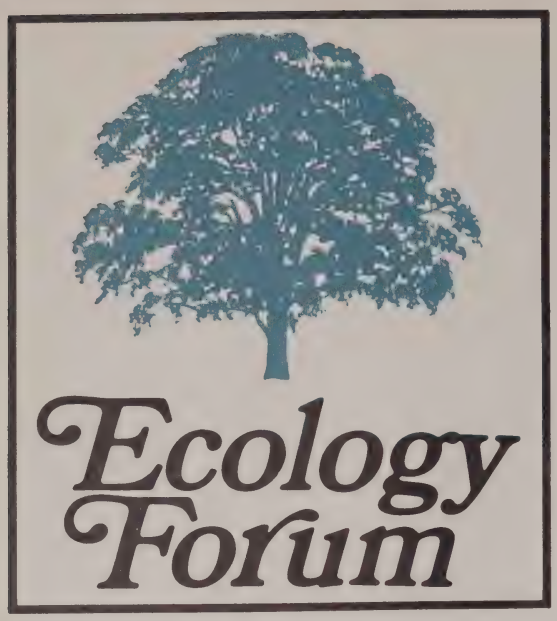
In Minnesota, the outlook is just as grim. Until the early 1800's, many thousands of prairie chickens inhabited the tall grass prairie which then occupied half of Minnesota's land surface. But intensive farming and grazing have reduced those fertile grasslands to a few thousand acres scattered across the western portion of the state. As a result, the prairie chicken, which is extremely dependent on natural prairie habitat, is now threatened by extinction in Minnesota; it is estimated that there remains a population of only 4,000 birds in the entire state.

The Conservancy's Minnesota Chapter has embarked on a program to establish a Prairie Chicken Preserve System in the state's western counties. The objective is twofold: to save outstanding stretches of prairie grassland before they are turned under by the plow, and by doing so, pro-

vide the habitat and nesting cover that the prairie chicken desperately needs. Hopefully, this action will stabilize the prairie chicken population and insure the continued survival of the species in Minnesota.

The Chapter has identified almost 3,000 acres of prairie chicken habitat, and purchase of some of the tracts is underway. These tracts include a 1400-acre grassland in Polk County containing a large, stable booming ground; a 160-acre virgin tall grass prairie in Polk County; 80 acres of gently rolling prairie in Becker County; and four undisturbed prairie tracts in Wilkin County totaling about 1200 acres. The Chapter has launched an intensive campaign to raise $310,000 for the acquisition of these and other natural areas in Minnesota. This fund-raising goal includes 15 per cent above the purchase price of the land to provide funds for management of the preserves.

The Minnesota Prairie Chicken Preserve System is intended to be an ongoing fund raising and acquisition program. If funds are available, the Chapter hopes to eventually acquire other prairie chicken habitat in Wilkin, Polk, Clay, Norman and Becker Counties. In addition, the Chapter will work in cooperation with the newly-formed Prairie Chicken Society to study management techniques and to educate landowners and farmers concerning the need for responsible management of prairie chickens and the lands that sustain them.




No. 10
by Robert E. Jenkins

# LAND USE AND THE CONSERVANCY

One field of economics holds that all wealth derives directly from the land. Private ownership of land and the freedom to make use and to profit by it are supposed to be part of the wellsprings of American economic pre-eminence and social welfare. But, as well as being a source of economic wealth, land is simultaneously the basis of the ecological life support systems upon which even human beings depend. Frequently, these two equities are more or less mutually exclusive: the more of the one, the less of the other. Maximum economic profit from the land is made when ecological naturalness and viability are maximally destroyed. Unable to "have our cake and eat it too," we seem to be on the road to eventual disaster because of this antagonistic relationship between ecological land health and most of what passes for land market economics.

Somehow, we have to establish a better land-use decision-making process to replace the "tragedy of the commons" situation which presently exists. In this system, each individual decision-maker determines his actions within the narrow frame of his own balance sheet without regard to the effects on society as a whole. A few years ago, Kenneth Watt, a leading systems ecologist, called attention to a grimly amusing absurdity which has arisen from this situation. Having spoken to practically every state and regional planner in the country, Watt suddenly came to the realization that all of them were simultaneously, and with no explicit comprehension of each others' actions, planning for their states to go out of the agricultural business within the next few years. Think how long it's been since you heard of anybody buying land for farming, and it will give you one perspective on the need for reform.

There are indications, of course, that our unplanned development is reaching some threshold levels with consequent negative feedbacks. Such negative feedbacks of land abuse have been evident for literally thousands of years, but now the dimensions of the problem have become such that all sectors of society are beginning to feel the pinch. For example, suburban sprawl has gobbled land so rapidly and in such inefficient patterns that even major public developments like airports and highways are increasingly hard to site. Some of the most horrendous phenomena, such as slurb-spawning public works, the malignant spread of the rural remote-sale subdivisions, and the insolently-crass Everglades jetport, finally propelled the land use mess into the national consciousness. As a result, in 1970 Senator Henry Jackson introduced the first of a series of Senate bills intended to begin to rectify this problem. The Senate finally passed its version in the fall of 1973, and the odds are that we will have national land use policy legislation early in 1974.

This action, though a belated and modest beginning, presages an inevitable tide of changes which will revolutionize land use planning in this country and possibly even the land tenure system itself. These matters have been pushed out of the headlines by the energy crisis and other exigencies, but their long-term significance cannot be overestimated.

From the Conservancy's point of view, the National Land Use Policy and Planning Assistance Bill (S. 268), is a timely document which focuses national attention on problems the Conservancy has wrestled with for many years. The Act cannot be said to be negative toward development, since some of its important provisions are intended to deliberately set aside and protect certain future development options; but, for the most part, its thrust is properly protective of values in land that might be rapidly destroyed by current market forces.

The bill focuses on land areas and developments of "more than local concern." The section of particular interest to the Conservancy proposes that the states be encouraged to make compre-

hensive inventories and establish regulatory procedures for the protection of "areas of critical environmental concern." Three kinds of such areas are generally defined by the Act as follows:

1) Fragile and historic lands
2) Hazard lands
3) Renewable natural resources lands

The last are basically prime agricultural and commercial forest lands, though certain natural ecosystems might also be included. Hazard lands are those on which development is infeasible or perilous (one could say stupid) because of the clear exposure of the area to periodic flooding, unstable slope conditions, seismic activity, rapid erosion, oceanic storms, etc. The item of greatest concern to the Conservancy is the "fragile" part of the first category.

The Nature Conservancy, as the national organization most identified with and involved in ecosystem preservation, has an obligation to see that the protection of ecosystems, biological diversity, endangered species habitat, scientific and educational areas, and "ecologically significant lands" generally are not passed over as planning proceeds and as a regulatory process is implemented. Internally, there is a great deal which we must do to become a constructive part of the larger land use picture. Our inventories of outstanding natural areas, ecosystems, and habitats conducted over many years must be made readily available in the critical environmental areas evaluation process. We must prepare to make important contributions to new inventories which will be conducted under the stipulations of the Act. We must look at the possibility of employing new techniques, primarily of less than fee simple acquisition, to complement regulatory procedures so that the private sector can add its weight to public actions for greatly improving our protective mechanisms on large tracts of natural lands.

There is an important role for the chapters, volunteers, and the regional offices because of the discretion left to the states in defining critical areas. Public participation will be insured through a hearings process. A great deal of expert and lay opinion will be sought by the planners, partly because this is all new to them too; they are feeling their way. We must all prepare to articulate the values we perceive in natural landscape and to make sure that these values are accorded the priority they merit. We must look to our own land acceptance guidelines and make sure that our criteria are objective and defensible. Not only would we like them to be deserving of emulation, but we do not want to be trapped into becoming a wrongly contentious, negative element in the process of rational land use reform.

The Conservancy has for many years been involved in mobilizing private actions to protect ecologically vital areas for which public protective action was inadequate. We have always known that our efforts were far from sufficient. We could never save enough by ourselves to accomplish our purposes. To draw an extended analogy, we were fighting a holding action to save all we could until reinforcements arrived. Now at last, we've heard some bugles and it seems that those reinforcements may finally be coming. The prospect alone should lift our spirits and we must begin laying plans as to how we may best combine forces in launching a larger offensive to turn the tide in the preservation battle.

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## ENO RIVER: A PROGRESS REPORT

The Fall 1973 issue of the *News* included an article about the Conservancy's efforts to preserve a stretch of North Carolina's Eno River. We are pleased to report that since that issue went to press, the project committee has achieved a major breakthrough.

The City of Durham had been acquiring lands along a section of the Eno with the possible intention of damming the River to form a reservoir. But on November 1, the Durham City Council ruled out this possibility and agreed to sell those lands within the proposed reservoir site to the State. The North Carolina Department of Natural and Economic Resources will hold the properties for addition to the proposed Eno River State Park.

## JAQUES BOOK DELAYED

Due to publishing difficulties, the Francis Lee Jaques book will not be available for members until sometime later this year.

## LEARN TODAY ABOUT GIFTS FOR TOMORROW

The story of Willie Browne, the 80-year-old recluse who gave The Nature Conservancy his 360 acres of wild marshland near Jacksonville, Florida, is easily the Conservancy's most popular and recounted success. It is not so much the size of Mr. Browne's gift or even the sophisticated gift technique employed that makes the story so popular.

Instead it is the realization of many Conservancy members, friends and acquaintances that one needn't be "wealthy" to do something meaningful in land conservation. Perhaps there are many potential Willie Brownes out there who would welcome the kind of advice and counsel

the Conservancy was able to provide Willie Browne.

In Mr. Browne's case, he needed life income and the peace of mind of knowing that his beloved marshland would be preserved and looked after long after he became part of its sod. Perhaps the Conservancy can suggest opportunities for supporting land conservation which are tailored to your specific wants and needs.

To encourage an exchange of ideas, a reply card is enclosed in this issue of the *News*. The Conservancy invites you to ask about techniques of giving today or providing for the Conservancy tomorrow through wills, trusts and bequests so as to optimize chances for saving the land while achieving other personal objectives.

## MRS. WALLER NAMED

Wilhelmine Kirby Waller, a member of the Conservancy's Board of Governors, has been appointed a member of the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality. The Committee is advisory to the President and the Council on Environmental Quality. A former President of the Garden Clubs of America, Mrs. Waller will serve on the Committee for a term of three years.

## BULLETIN: CONSERVANCY PURCHASES SEVILLETA DE LA JOYA LAND GRANT

Shortly before this issue went to press, a 220,000-acre tract in central New Mexico was sold to the Conservancy. The area, which has been valued as high as $10 to $12 million, was purchased from the Campbell Family Foundation for a fraction of its value.

Located about 65 miles south of Albuquerque in Socorro County, the 343 square mile tract of semi-arid land is scheduled to be transferred by the Conservancy to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for use as a wildlife refuge and research area.

Wildlife within the area includes puma, bobcat, pronghorn antelope, mule deer, coyote, roadrunner, great horned owl, bald eagle, and the endangered peregrine falcon.

Sevilleta is the largest single project in which the Conservancy has been involved. It is also believed to be the largest single segment of land ever acquired for conservation by any private organization.

## PROJECT REVOLVING FUND DRIVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

Eleventh hour assistance from three of the Conservancy's most stalwart advocates brought the Project Revolving Fund drive to a successful conclusion on the afternoon of November 30, 197[illegible]. The drive, sparked by a challenge from the Ford Foundation three years ago, has increased the Project Revolving Fund to $4,000,000. Under terms of the challenge, the Foundation matched $1 for each $4 raised by the Conservancy.

With the Project Revolving Fund's increase of 300 percent, the Conservancy's land saving capacity and versatility are greatly enhanced; a stronger Fund means that more prairies, forests and wetlands will be preserved. The Conservancy is grateful to the Ford Foundation and to members and friends whose support helped us reach this important goal.

## ANNUAL MEETING SITE CHANGED

Members attending this year's Annual Meeting may have a chance to enjoy Washington's famed cherry blossoms rather than walk the sands of Virginia Beach. The threat of consumer gasoline shortages and uncertain transportation services has made it necessary for the Executive Committee of the Conservancy's Board of Governors to shift the site of the Annual Meeting to Washington, D.C. Washington is well served by public transportation, and it was thought that members attending the 1974 Meeting on April 27 would find it more convenient to journey to the Nation's Capital rather than to Virginia Beach, former site for the Meeting.

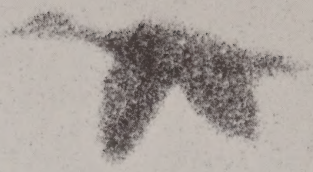
Concurrently, in a move to reduce costs and encourage local attendance, the Meeting schedule has been shortened to a Friday evening-Saturday event rather than the usual Thursday evening through Saturday conference.

Details regarding the headquarters hotel, alternate accommodations, and procedural information will be mailed to all regular and life members in the third week in March. Project members and friends of the Conservancy should write the National Office, Annual Meeting Registrar, for details.

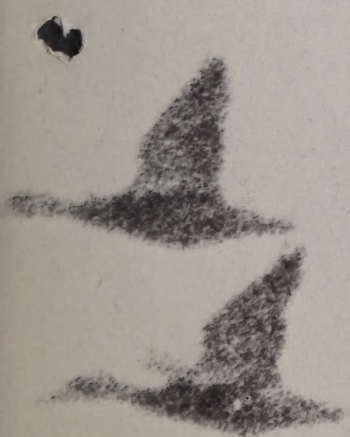
The Washington location will give members an opportunity to visit the Conservancy's Arlington offices and meet all members of the national staff.

At the request of many members, an attempt is being made to arrange a bus field trip to the Dismal Swamp leaving Washington Sunday morning, April 28, and returning Monday, April 29. Plans, however, are still tentative and further information will be forwarded in the March mailing.

The salt marshes, pockets of virgin growth, natural flyways of migratory birds, the last retreats of endangered animals . . . let it be.



It takes a lot of effort to leave things alone.
The Conservancy spends all its time at it.



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